



New Farm Bill Invests in Rural America

With a strong, bipartisan vote, the Congress has passed America's new farm bill. That step, along with President Bush's strong endorsement of our legislation, clears the way for this stimulus package for rural America to become law.

This is a good bill for Iowa and all of rural America. It marks a new direction in farm policy that reflects the hard work of America's farmers and the needs of rural Americans.

The choice was clear: we could either restore the farm safety net and invest in conservation, renewable energy and rural development; or, we could continue down a rocky road of emergency payments that is failing Iowa's farm families. I'm proud that the Congress and President Bush chose a new beginning for rural America by investing in the security and success of our farm families and in the economic future of our rural communities.

Our legislation has garnered broad support from groups like the Iowa Farmers Union and the Iowa Farm Bureau to the Iowa Environmental Council, the Iowa Rural Water Association and the Independent Bankers of America. One of the reasons why we were able to bring together such a broad coalition in support of this farm bill because we listened to all sides and put the needs of farmers and rural Americans first.

I am also pleased that President Bush supports the farm bill and has said it includes, 'the strongest conservation provisions of any farm bill ever passed by Congress. President Bush's support for our legislation is a testament to our bipartisan effort to provide a secure and prosperous new beginning for Iowa and rural America.

When we began writing the farm bill, I said that I wanted a bill that would restore the farm safety net, increase funding for conservation, especially on lands in production, and to make a new investment in the economic future of rural America. I'm proud to say that the new farm bill achieves these goals.

I am particularly proud of the work we've done in the area of rural economic development and renewable energy. The farm bill will provide an additional \$1 billion for equity capital programs, water and sewer projects, rural broadband access and establishing value-added enterprises. These investments will help make Iowa a place where businesses can grow and create good paying jobs.

The farm bill also invests more than \$400 million for the promotion of bioenergy production. It provides for a grant and loan program so farmers can purchase energy systems and creates an initiative to help farmers cut costs by becoming more energy efficient. Of particular importance is a provision in the bill that promotes purchases of biobased products by federal agencies. Asking the federal government to lead the way in the use of biobased products will give renewable energy businesses the boost they need to expand and create jobs. The federal government is the biggest consumer we have and I will work to make sure they are consuming renewable products which help strengthen new value added markets.

Investing in rural America means supporting our farmers, but it also means investing in the entire rural economy. That is why this farm bill includes the greatest increase in conservation funding ever, resources to improve rural technology and infrastructure, a section devoted to renewable energy development for the first time ever and a strong nutrition program.

I am proud of our work on this farm bill. This is a good bill for Iowa and all of rural America. It marks a new direction in farm policy that reflects the hard work of America's farmers and the needs of rural Americans.